

Army Birthday Remarks

14 June 1973

Naval War College

Ladies and gentlemen, members and friends of the United States Army. I consider it an honor and a personal pleasure to join you in commemorating the 198th anniversary of the founding of the United States Army, our oldest military service. We'll have to wait until October 13th to be that old.

Today's event, your birthday celebration, has become a traditional part of the Naval War College program, and rightfully it should. Our respective services have had a long and historic association here at the College and in Newport so it certainly is appropriate that we take a few moments to commemorate our heritage.

Perhaps many of you will remember from your history books that General George Washington came to Newport to plan the Yorktown Campaign with General Rochambeau, thereby bringing the American Revolution to a successful and victorious conclusion. Right over there (point to Fort Adams) members of the Army actively garrisoned Fort Adams for 150 years, guarding the approaches to Narragansett Bay and the Newport Naval Base. Luckily Fort Adams never fired a shot in anger, at least not at an enemy of the United States. When they left the Army became the first military service to hit Aquidneck Island with Base closures.

Our ties through the College go even deeper. Our second president and distinguished historian, Alfred Thayer Mahan, spent his early life at West Point where his father was a member of the faculty.

I was particularly interested to learn that one of the five members of the College's first faculty was an Army Lieutenant named Tasker Bliss. He later became Chief of Staff of the Army and was also the first President of the Army War College, founded in November of 1901. Note that it took a Naval War College trained man and 17 years for the Army to catch up with us.

So from the very beginning we have enjoyed a close personal and professional relationship. Through the years the Naval War College has profited from the many excellent contributions made by representatives of the U.S. Army.

However, today is the time to put the spotlight on the Army. Our country can be justifiably proud of the record you have set from Valley Forge to the Argonne, Anzio Beach to the delta in Vietnam. Your performance on the field of

battle and in peacetime has set a standard by which we are all judged. From the dreary and oppressive days of Valley Forge when the foundation of discipline and training was chiselled out, you have been the leader in shaping U.S. armed forces into crack fighting units.

I think a brief quotation from the minutes of the Second Continental Congress best sums up your record and how you are assessed by others here today, "The Continental Army withstood seemingly unbearable hardships and suffered occasional reverses, but it never panicked in the presence of an enemy. Its courage and achievements set an example for other military groups." That reputation has held fast for the intervening two centuries.

Yet, for all the splendid accomplishments of the Army down through the years our country still faces a challenging

and uncertain future. We must be prepared to deter a faceless enemy in an era when intercontinental nuclear weapons abound.

At the same time, we are under close scrutiny, perhaps more than ever before. We must be more convincing in presenting the case for national defense to a vastly more sophisticated audience.

If we do not, or can not, make our case well, this criticism could possibly lead this country into a repetition of its rejection of military preparedness as in the late 1790's when the Army was down to an unbelievable force of only 87 officers and men. Lack of preparedness today would have more serious consequences than it did then. Our position and responsibilities in the world are vastly different.

The responsibility is on our shoulders--to learn from the past and profit from its lessons--to build upon the ideals on which this nation, and its Army, were founded. I challenge

all of you to meet the problems of the present face on.

By doing so, you will ensure still more honorable chapters to the rich heritage and history of the Army.

Speaking on behalf of all of your associates at the Naval War College, I congratulate you and the Army on your 198th birthday. With the exception of next December 1st in Philadelphia, may I wish you all good luck.

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